

CHANGES WITHIN THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST MOVEMENT

April 28, 2011 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is an expanded edition of a reply I gave to a missionary who wrote to express concern about IB churches that are “adapting” CCM.

There is a fierce battle raging within the Independent Baptist (IB) movement between those who are committed to the old Bible paths and those who are enticed by the new way. When I was saved in 1973 and joined an IB church a couple of months later it was assumed that practically every IB church was committed to the old paths. The SBC was universally condemned for its worldliness and theological compromise. A large percentage of IB churches had come out of the Convention and they tended to be plainspoken about its error. Today, a lot of former Ind. Baptists have gone back into the SBC and some of the SBC men are more “conservative” than some Ind. Baptists.

In regard to warning ministries, they were pretty common in 70s and 80s. There was the Calvary Contender, F.B.F. News Bulletin, Foundation, Plains Baptist Challenger, The Baptist Challenge, O Timothy, and others. Even the Sword did a bit of serious warning, particularly tearing into the SBC with no holds barred.

Many of those publications are defunct. Most significantly, there has been a sweeping change in attitude toward a warning ministry. In the past 20 years a large number of IB churches in Canada and the States and around the world, that still profess to be conservative, have moved from appreciating or at least tolerating a warning ministry, to not likening it, to demonizing it. (The pastor who wrote recently to say that he thinks demons led me to write the way I did about Lancaster is only the most glaring example of the demonization.)

Everything has been blurred. There is a desperate need for some clear divisions, and that is what I am trying to help create. For those who say Brother Cloud is divisive, I say, "Well done, you got the message." Creating some godly divisions within the IB movement (and wherever Bible-believing churches exist) is exactly what I am trying to do. Drawing clear Biblical lines in principle (not just having some set “standards”) and in association and being consistent with those lines is one of the greatest needs within the IB movement if we are going to maintain the truth for the next generation. The truth won't die, but it can die among Ind. Baptists, just as it died among the Waldenses and the Amish and the old-line Protestants (not that I am Protestant, of course) and countless other groups that once had a name that they lived. And Jesus die say rhetorically, "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

The confusing and most dangerous element is that many are still saying the right things even as they are walking down the new path toward emerging. They are buying into the philosophy that

we should be more positive, less about fighting more about unity (they say they believe in fighting, but they never fight and that they believe in warning but they rarely issue clear warnings), we should have a better image with society; we should focus more on evangelism and missions; we should back off of fighting over things like music and dress and entertainment and Bible versions and definitions of election (and the list gets longer as the compromise grows); we should focus on the heart and love and harmony; we should especially lighten up about music and make "edification" the standard. What is all of this if not the New Evangelical emerging philosophy?

Several people who have written to me lately have mentioned a certain man on staff at West Coast. I don't know the man personally, but it appears that he has the reputation of being a strong fundamentalist. I am not his judge and I don't know his heart, but we all know that associations and money can blind the eyes and shut the mouth of the best of men. It has happened throughout church history. That is why I am glad the Lord has kept me outside of those "big" ministries. My ministry isn't small by IB standards but I'm in a position not to be beholden for anything in regard to the IB empires like West Coast, Crown, and Hyles Anderson. I haven't been invited to speak there so I don't have to worry about losing my platform. And I'm certainly not on their salary. My pastor stands by me 100% in this battle and in the way I am fighting it. I have a wife who stands behind me. I have co-workers who stand behind me. I have a large number of friends and readers who stand behind me. Thus God has given me everything that I need in order to be able to be a watchman in this battle for the soul and heart of the IB movement (not that the movement needs to be saved, but those IB churches that are sound).

But then again, there have been many times when I have been tempted to keep my mouth shut about something in order to maintain the support of this or that man and to keep the invitations to this or that place coming, and by God's grace I have refused to do it. I refuse invitations that I know would require me to narrow my message and keep my mouth shut on anything whatsoever.

Last year, for example, I was invited to preach the graduation at a particular Bible college and I declined because they use some mild CCM and are a bit loose on standards across the board and are not careful enough about what teachers they bring on board and just have a "soft" philosophy that is not compatible to what God has taught me from His Word. I actually wanted to accept the invitation, but I knew that by so doing I could only either compromise or cause trouble by. Further, by speaking at that place, those watching would think that I was putting my stamp of approval on it and I could cause some to stumble.

I believe that it is men like the aforementioned fellow -- who as real insiders should be the ones sounding the alarms but aren't (and if they are trying to sound alarm, they are doing it ineffectively by being so "private" and quiet) -- who are the most serious problem, because they are allowing the compromise to progress and the compromisers to hide behind them. If a man stands where I stand in principle he should be supporting men like me in no uncertain terms.

It's time for some clear divisions, in my estimation. A lot of missionaries are going down the path of compromise because they refuse to break off from outfits like Trinity in Jacksonville. They pretend that the compromise happening in such places doesn't affect them and that they themselves are above it, but they are just religious politicians refusing to take the kind of stand that will cause them to lose support. They are hypocrites who say they are opposed to something on Biblical principle, etc, but in reality it is only lip service. You don't know what a man really believes and what his convictions really are until he pays a price for them.

In the early 1990s I was shocked to learn that some IBaptists were supporting Promise Keepers and were making ecumenical type noises about unity (not Scriptural unity based on truth but unscriptural unity based on who knows what) and non-judgmentalism. That crowd was largely BBFI. They were on the cutting edge of IB compromise and the path toward emerging, and a lot of concerned men left the BBFI in those days. The BBFI was soon followed by the Southwide Baptist Fellowship. Since the 1990s the BBF and Southwide people have been great haters of my warning ministry.

Today the softness is spreading everywhere and only those churches and missionary works that are properly informed and educated and are not idolatrously committed to some empire builder are standing firm.

The weight of opinion among Ind. Baptists has already swung decisively against the spirit of Psalm 119:128. Godly hating is not welcome. It is maligned. It is mischaracterized as shooting the wounded and other such nonsense. This has long been the climate within the SBC, and the IB movement in general is rapidly moving in that direction. Most IB churches are already there.

Soon, IB schools won't have to say that they are opposed to CCM and such, because there won't be enough IB churches that care about those issues to worry about it as far as drawing students from them.

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